

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER • MARK SCHAUER • 19TH DISTRICT

# Schauer Press Release

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## **Schauer Calls on Congress to Increase Public Transit Funding for Michigan**

*Bipartisan resolution for Amtrak expansion approved by Senate committee*

LANSING - The Senate Appropriations Committee voted today to approve Senate Resolution 200, a resolution cosponsored by State Senator Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) that calls on Congress to support federal funding to expand Amtrak's passenger rail capacity and number of routes in Michigan. The resolution has bipartisan support and passed today's committee hearing unanimously. It now moves to the full Senate for consideration.

"Expanding Amtrak's capacity and routes in Michigan could help create new jobs and drive economic growth," said Schauer. "It's clear the demand for public transportation is rising and supporting these options will help consumers deal with high gas prices and help communities attract investment."

The resolution urges Congress and President Bush to support funding for expansions to Michigan's Amtrak system following the recent passage of House Resolution 6003 in Congress. H.R. 6003 gives states access to potentially \$500 million per year in capital grant money for five years for improvements to passenger rail infrastructures.

Ridership has increased 47 percent on all three Michigan Amtrak routes in the last six years. The Wolverine route, from Pontiac through Detroit to Chicago, increased its passenger load 2.5 percent in 2007 alone. The state-supported Blue Water route between Port Huron and Chicago saw increased ridership of 3 percent in 2007, and ridership on the state-supported Pere Marquette route between Grand Rapids and Chicago increased 2.8 percent. All three corridors experienced sold-out trains in 2007, some on a regular basis, which may have limited their true earning potential. Over the first seven months of the 2008 fiscal year, Pere Marquette ridership is up 9.8 percent and Blue Water ridership has increased 6.5 percent. Revenues have grown as well, from 4.5 to 9.2 percent.

With limited routes available, Amtrak trains still contributed \$500,000 of unanticipated ticket income to the State of Michigan. Trends suggest that demand for passenger rail services will continue to increase, and without the necessary infrastructure improvements, the state will not have the resources to meet the demand. A complete copy of the resolution can be accessed at <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2008-SR-0200>.

Schauer has long been a supporter of encouraging additional transit options throughout Michigan, and recently met with Jackson-area community leaders and transportation officials to discuss the potential of a high-speed rail service for Jackson County. The group considered the possibility of expanding the current Detroit-Ann Arbor Commuter Rail Project, which hopes to have cars running by the end of 2010, to include Jackson.

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